

TABERNACLE

Taught by
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Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for every circumstance of life, and as we come this morning we're mindful of Your gracious hand upon us. As we turn to the Word of God we thirst for righteousness, we long for a knowledge of Thee more and more in order that we might love Thee more and serve better. Grant that our study this morning might be enlightened by the Spirit of God, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Introduction

There are a lot of details with regard to the tabernacle. We can figure some of them out, some of them we don't know for sure. I've seen a number of models, some built by engineers, other by those who believe they have figured out what the Scripture says, and I'm not belittling any of that, but I'll point out where we just don't know for sure and therefore we simply suggest what this or that part of the tabernacle was like. I suspect some of you have studied it in detail, and if you can add some information as we go along it will be appreciated.

To begin with, I want to look at the outer court and the gateway. Turn to Exodus 27:9-19. You will notice as we go over the notes as we study this, in parentheses I have another set of references in connection with the particular point we are dealing with. That's because the information is found twice in Exodus. Once God tells Moses what to build, and that's recorded in detail. Then the Scripture starts over and tells what they built. And so it tells the story twice. Sometimes in almost the same words. On one occasion it starts at the inside of the tabernacle and moves out; in the other case it starts on the outside and moves in.

Outer Court and Gateway

Exodus 27:9-19: "And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side. And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver. And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of one hundred cubits long, and its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten and their sockets ten. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits, and the hangings on one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits, their pillars three and their sockets three. And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits, their pillars three and their sockets three. And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet of fine twined linen, wrought with needlework, and their pillars shall be four and their

sockets four. All the pillars round about the court shall be banded with silver, their hooks shall be of silver and their sockets of bronze. The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits and the breadth fifty everywhere, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of bronze. And all the vessels of the tabernacle in the service thereof and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of bronze."

In the charts I have given you, what we're talking about now is this outer perimeter of the tabernacle -- like the outer walls of a fence. That's actually what it is -- a fence that comprises the court. On the notes I put the measurements in feet instead of cubits, so let me explain a cubit. Normally it was a measure from the elbow of a man to the tip of his middle finger, and of course that varies from man to man. It is generally assumed that the standard for a cubit is eighteen inches, or one and one-half feet. In the Middle East we find that there were four or five different cubits that were used, some longer and some shorter. So when we refer to a cubit as is generally accepted in connection with the tabernacle, we're speaking about a foot and a half, and that was established from the average man's elbow to the tip of his middle finger. So ten cubits would be fifteen feet -- you simply multiply a cubit by one and a half feet -- twenty cubits would be thirty feet. In the notes I refer to feet because I thought we would comprehend that a little better than cubits, though the Scripture reads in cubits.

In your notes, the size of that outer court -- 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. In the last of verse 9 it mentions the south side as a hundred cubits long -- that is 150 feet. So the size of the tabernacle is 150 feet and 150 feet on the south side and on the north side. That was held up by twenty pillars. You have that mentioned in verse 10 -- "and the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be bronze and the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver." They were pillars or posts along the north side and the south side. The sockets were a place into which the pillars sat. So in erecting the tabernacle they put the socket down and the pillar on top of it.

A number of years ago Harry Rimer wrote an article in which he discussed the tabernacle. He was an engineer, among other things. He pointed out how that by this construction the tabernacle could be adapted to most any terrain they might find as they wandered about in the wilderness. With the separate sockets, if there is a little bit of a grade it didn't matter because the pillars were put into the sockets and the side was hung on the pillars, so it adapted itself to the terrain. Then there were ten pillars on the west side, verse 12, with their sockets.

The tabernacle always faced east, and on the east side there was a gate, described in verses 13 through 16: "And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits." That is, the entire width was 75 feet on the east, just like on the west. On the west there was a solid wall, on the east it was broken by this gate. Verse 14: "The hangings on one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits and [verse 15] on the other side fifteen cubits [that's thirty

cubits] [verse 16] and the gate shall be twenty cubits." So there are fifty cubits all the way across, just as on the west side. The gate was twenty cubits, which would make it thirty feet wide.

You'll notice in this drawing the gate is put right in line with the rest of the wall. I have seen constructions in which it has not been done exactly that way. That is, they have the gate set out from the wall instead of in line with it. The Scripture doesn't indicate for sure, and since it doesn't, I rather assume the gate was hung across and in line with the wall. But that's one difference of opinion with regard to the construction of the wall.

All the way around fine twined linen was hung on the pillars, verse 9: "And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle of fine twined linen." Then the hooks and the bands mentioned in verse 10 are those things which were used to hang the linen across those posts all the way around the court.

Q. Where did they get the material?

A. In an earlier chapter Moses asks that everyone who wants to bring some stuff to make the tabernacle. They brought so much that Moses said to quit -- they had too much. I've never heard a pastor say, "Don't put any more in the offering plate, we've got enough." But Moses had that trouble. In fact, the ladies even gave up their mirrors -- imagine that. Mirrors were made of bronze and polished. You remember that when the children of Israel left Egypt they asked the Egyptians, and the Egyptians gave them everything they wanted. They were glad to get rid of the Israelites. So they brought out of Egypt gold and silver, and all of this stuff. And some of the other material, for example the acacia wood were trees growing out there in the wilderness, and they had animal skins, and one of those may have been from the water, either a porpoise or a sea cow or something of that sort. So there was plenty of material.

In verse 18, "the length of the courts shall be a hundred cubits and the breadth fifty everywhere and the height five cubits of fine twined linen." Five cubits is seven and a half feet. Thus far we have an outer court 150 feet by 75 feet and 7 1/2 feet high made of fine linen hung from those posts, with the gate on the east side 30 feet wide. The measurements between each of the posts are the same as the height -- 7 1/2 feet high and 7 1/2 feet wide. So each is a square -- probably the best way to do it -- that's the way the Lord does things.

Then you'll notice there is no roof on it -- it's open to the sky. There is a building inside that is covered, and we'll talk about that, but the court is open to the sky.

The wording in verse 18 may be a little difficult -- I'll read it again: "The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits and the breadth fifty everywhere [in the Hebrew Bible it reads, 'fifty by fifty'] and the height five cubits." I think this is what it means:

You'll notice that there's a little building inside, and that building is placed in such fashion that the court before of the building is fifty cubits by fifty cubits square in which you have the brazen altar and the laver. That is a fifty cubit square, or seventy-five foot square, court before the tabernacle itself.

Now, the whole area is called the tabernacle. But sometimes in the Scripture, when you're reading about the tabernacle or the tabernacle of the testimony, it's just referring to the little building on the inside.

Q. Could you discuss verse 16 where it says that the hangings of the gate, 20 cubits of blue, purple and scarlet and fine twined linen.

A. Thank you for that. You'll notice that our drawing has (and this is not my drawing -- it's one that I copied out of a book and I checked very carefully -- some authorities don't seem to know, others assured me that as long as I was not doing this for pay it was all right to copy) -- you'll notice there's a different coloring. That is to indicate in this verse 16 that it was made of fine linen but it had these other colors interwoven in it. So that when someone approached, as I might approach, very sleepily at the time of the morning prayer, he wouldn't have to wonder where the gate was. The rest was simply fine twined linen, and the gate was located by the colors.

C. The gate must have been pulled up in the morning.

A. The hanging at the gate was free-swinging so they could go right in. They even had to bring the animals in to the north side of the altar.

Let's go to B, then -- the inner house of the tabernacle. Here we go to Exodus 26. Verse 1: "Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle [now it's talking about that inner building] with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, purple and scarlet; with cherubim; of skillful work shalt thou make them. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits; and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge [or edge] in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second." That sounds kind of like language we don't understand. The verse is difficult to translate, but I'll tell you in a moment what I think it means.

Verse 5: "Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty clasps of gold and couple the curtains together with the clasps, and it shall be one tabernacle."

In these first six verses we're talking about linen curtains woven with blue and purple and scarlet (verse 1) and then in that the image of cherubim also worked there. They'll be 28 cubits long (verse 2) and four cubits wide (verse 2). Then there are five curtains (verse 3) coupled to another five curtains (last part of verse 3). How is that coupling done? Verses 4, 5 and 6 tell you. There are loops in the edges of the curtains. Two curtains are brought together and those loops are intertwined, and then by means of clasps (verse 6) those two curtains become one. The difference between edge or selvedge in verse 4 distinguishes the one side of the curtain from the other. Eventually all of those curtains are bound together by clasps, so that it becomes a big curtain to drape over this inner building. They are curtains four cubits wide with loops on each edge; those loops are brought together and held by clasps so that eventually these ten curtains become one large curtain that will be draped over the building inside.

Verse 7: "And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle; eleven curtains" -- instead of the ten earlier, with goats' hair now, there are eleven curtains, and the same thing is done. The length of one curtain in this case is 30 cubits instead of 28 and the breadth of one curtain is four cubits, and the eleven curtains were all of one measure, that is, the same size, "and thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shall double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty clasps of bronze and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together that it may be one. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the side and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side to cover it."

Instead of having ten curtains, we now have eleven, and they are put together in the same way, with loops and clasps. But they are of a little different measure. So when the linen curtain is put on first and then the curtains of goats' hair put on second, and we'll go over this again, you find that the goats' hair cover is larger than the linen curtain that went underneath. In the front and back it's doubled back sufficiently to fit the building over which it goes.

C. They are to keep the dust out.

A. Yes, dust and rain, and so on. And there are two more coverings on top of this yet.

C. I wondered why four coverings.

A. Look at verse 14 -- "And thou shalt make the covering for the tent of rams' skin dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins." That's all that's said about them, but there are two more coverings -- no dimensions given, so we don't know

how long they are. Josephus, whether he's right or wrong, says they reached all the way to the ground, and most likely they did. The "badger" -- I'm not just sure of that Hebrew word -- the scholars have different opinions. Some think it refers to a porpoise, some think it refers to a sea cow -- we see the manatees here in Florida, at one time they were plentiful in the Red Sea -- that that would have been a water-proof covering. So there are four coverings to keep out the dust of the wilderness and the rain and whatever else there was -- a wonderful arrangement.

Verse 15: "And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board." Ten cubits -- fifteen feet high. We're talking now about this inner building -- the building on which those coverings were draped. So the building is made of boards, according to verse 16, that are fifteen feet high and a cubit and a half wide. "Two tenons shall be in one board." And those are simply two legs that fit down into sockets that had two holes, so they would be steady upon the ground.

Verse 18: "And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver" for those boards to sit in. Verse 20: "And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards; and there forty sockets". Verse 22: "And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners" and they're not just sure how those fit except they believe they overlapped enough so the building was ten cubits wide.

Q. Did they have trees that large that they could make boards that size?

A. The word that's translated "board" in verse 16 is by some said to be translated as a frame. Here again is one thing we don't know because we're not just sure of the word. The point you raised is correct, that a board that would be that wide and that high would be pretty heavy and would take quite a tree. So it's possible that it's made out of a frame of acacia wood.

Verse 24: "And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above . . ." Verse 25: "And they shall be eight boards and their sockets . . ." Verse 26: "And thou shalt make bars of acacia wood," and those bars went through. In other words, the frames were standing up against each other, and there were loops through which the bars were put so the building was fastened together and was strong. Verse 29: ". . . overlay the boards with gold," that was inside and outside.

Let's go over the notes again. The construction, first of all the boards: 45 feet long on the south side and on the north side; 15 feet wide on the west side, and 15 feet high. Notice, we haven't said anything about the east side because that's where the openings are. Then the four layers of curtains: linen, verse 1; goats' hair, verse 7; rams' skins, verse 14; and badgers' skins, verse 14.

Incidentally, whatever that badger skin was, in Ezekiel 16 we find that while they walked around in the wilderness and their clothes didn't wear out, their shoes were made out of badgers' skins, so it must have been pretty tough stuff.

One of the problems in connection with the building and the coverings is: when you take the measurements of the building and then you take the measurements of those skins that were put over the top, you find two things: one of them, if you have flat roof there are problems with the measurements unless you let some of the coverings drape onto the ground. There are some who suggest that the roof of the building was not flat but had a peak, even though the post that would support the peak is not mentioned in the Scripture. Or, again, instead of having a couple of the coverings down on the ground, there was sort of an overhang held fast by some poles and guy wires, so that you had a little overhang outside of the tabernacle, and that has something to say for it. For example, in the story of Samuel, you remember that Samuel's mother had promised that if the Lord would give her a son she would, as the Scripture says, "lend him to the Lord as long as he liveth." When he was old enough, perhaps just a couple of years old, he was taken to Eli and turned over to him. Every year she would make him a little ephod like the priests wore and would bring it to him. The point I'm making is that he would lie down before the lights went out in the tabernacle, that is, the candelabra, and that he was sleeping, apparently, under this overhang (I Sam. 3). So here is something about the tabernacle that we just do not know for sure. Then, also, on the long side, if you take the measurements of those curtains and that second one that was doubled under, they are longer than the wooden building. So some feel there was an frame that extended out to support the extra length of those curtains. It doesn't matter from the viewpoint of understanding the tabernacle, but we're talking about the structure this morning, and I wanted to point that difference of opinion. We just don't know exactly how that was built.

Q. Would you say a few words about the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

A. The Lord willing, next week we'll start with those two veils because we're not done with the tabernacle.

But, the Holy Place was the first section of this building in which there were a table of shewbread, altar of incense and a golden candlestick. Into that area appointed priests only were permitted to go, and they ministered there every day in connection with the altar of incense. It got to the point in David's time when there were so many priests that he divided them into twenty-four courses of priests, so they served a week and then took six months off. That's the kind of job I was always looking for and never found. However, they were supposed to go among the people and teach them the law. They ministered daily in the Holy Place.

In the Holy of Holies the high priest only went in, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement, and he went in several times on that day. You remember Nadab and Abihu went in there drunk and were

struck dead. So God said, "Now let's get this straight. Not the ordinary priest, but the high priest dressed only in ordinary priests' clothing on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

Q. Re when they moved the tabernacle.

A. In the first chapters of Numbers this whole thing, and I'm not making light of it, was organized down to a gnat's eyebrow. Everyone had a job to do. The people were encamped around the tabernacle in a particular order. When God said, "Let's move," everyone had his job to do -- some had responsibility for the posts; others for the linens, etc. There were wagons to carry the heavy items. As things were taken down those responsible would move out and others would move in to do their jobs. Then they would go ahead of the people and set the tabernacle up at the next place so the rest of the tribes could settle around it. It was all done in order.

The veil which divided between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies -- the ark was not to be seen by even the priests. When they took the veil down they stepped forward and dropped it over the ark and wrapped the ark in the veil. Then there was another covering. It was carried on the shoulders of priests. When they arrived at the place where it was to be set up, they took that veil, hung it up and stepped back, never having seen the ark at all. One thing I appreciate on a church service is when it's done in order, and I think we can learn that from the way they handled the tabernacle.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we thank You that the tabernacle is no longer necessary for our Lord has come, the law has been moved aside, and we have an entrance into Your presence by His grace. Watch over us, strengthen us, and keep us in health we do pray, till we meet again, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.